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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#)  
SUBJECT: MAYSAN GOVERNOR: I AM A SADRIST

Classified By: Acting Deputy Political Counselor Michael Ma for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: "I am a Sadrism," said Maysan Governor Adil al-Maliki in a July 24 meeting with MND-C DCG-S COL Smith and poloffs at the governor's office in Amarah. During a wide-ranging conversation Maliki expressed concerns, which he said were shared by the Maysani public, over the "militarization" of the province and the possibility of skirmishes between Maysanis and U.S. troops. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between Special Groups and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), saying that while the former were used by Iran against the U.S., the latter were "backed into a corner" and had been formally dissolved by Sadr in his June 13 statement. Maliki was generally supportive of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), although he identified extrajudicial raids and arrests and Iraqi Police (IP) corruption as continuing issues. Explaining his decision not to run for reelection, Maliki said that Iraqis "want new blood" in political office. He added that "American pressure" was required to pass the controversial elections law. He outlined past provincial development initiatives and expressed reservations over the "political" motives behind the GOI's allocation of the 100 million USD in development assistance. At the end of the lengthy meeting, Maliki said "we should call the Guinness Book of Records because we set a new record for the number of questions in a meeting," but added that "this is good - the most important thing is a dialogue." Zaid Hoshi, Maliki's assistant, also attended the meeting. End Summary.

Concern over U.S. presence  
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¶2. (C) "Frankly, people are concerned about the U.S. presence," said Maliki, explaining that because the U.S. was seen as "more aggressive" than the UK, people are worried about the possibility of "skirmishes." Maliki added that "Maysan is tribal and eastern - 100 percent," and expressed worry that U.S. soldiers would violate tribal customs and honor by entering homes and looking at tribal women. COL Smith clarified that the U.S. was in Maysan (a PIC Province) at the request of PM Maliki, partnering with the ISF and border forces in support of Iraqi security forces in Operation Tidings of Peace. COL Smith emphasized that American soldiers do not act independently of the Iraqi forces and respect Iraqi culture. He urged the governor to pass any reported violations to the U.S. officers responsible for the province.

"I am a Sadrism"  
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¶3. (C) "I am a Sadrism," said Maliki, "I am a follower of Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr due to his resistance to Saddam. But I am an Iraqi Arab foremost." He divided the Shia into three political camps: ISCI, Da'wa, and the Sadrists. "In the beginning, Sadr was associated with nationalism," said Maliki, "but later the movement was infiltrated by Iran." He further dissected the Sadr movement into different groups: "Some support the political process; some support the

military struggle. Some see the U.S. as an occupier. Some don't want any Iranian presence; some are very loyal to Iran." Referring to the threat posed to political Sadrists by militants within the movement, Maliki said "I myself have problems with extremists, and I have been targeted for assassination."

Must distinguish between JAM and SGs  
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¶4. (C) Maliki stressed that JAM and Special Groups exist in "large numbers" in Maysan and that "the majority of the people are Sadrists." He dismissed the significance of the numerous weapons caches discovered by the Iraqi Army (IA), saying that "weapons exist throughout Iraq" and that the borders "are completely open." Maliki said that Iran had tried to use JAM against the U.S. "Therefore," he concluded, "we have a common interest in distinguishing between JAM and Special Groups," warning that otherwise, "the two will work together and Iran will achieve its goal." When asked how to distinguish between the two, Maliki shrugged and said "that is an intelligence question; you probably know more than I do." When pressed, he said that "most" Special Groups were in Iran, while the ones remaining in Iraq "are poor and don't even realize they were working for Iranian interests." Asked if Special Groups were receiving training in Iran, Maliki said "I see stories on that on the satellite channels, but believe me, I don't know." Later he said that he assumed Iran was providing training. Asked if Special Groups were returning to Maysan, Maliki demurred that the IA was responsible for security as long as military operations continued in the province. "The tracks will tell you about

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your prey," he said, adding that details of how operations were conducted would reveal Special Group involvement.

JAM has been disbanded  
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¶5. (C) Maliki said that Sadr had dissolved JAM due to widespread disobedience from the Special Groups. Referring to Sadr's June 13 statement, Maliki said "If you examine it closely, you will see that Sadr disbanded JAM." He added that he himself had advocated disbanding JAM since 2005, and dismissed Sadr's talk of forming a new group targeted at Coalition Forces as "a symbolic statement" designed to reassure his followers that he was continuing to lead the resistance against the "occupation."

ISF improving  
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¶6. (C) Tidings of Peace was a "clear and strong signal" that the GOI and ISF were capable of establishing control over Maysan, said Maliki. He attributed the lack of resistance to a feeling of intimidation among militia members due to previous government successes in Basrah and Sadr City. Maliki said that "in general," the ISF was improving, but added that concerns remained about extrajudicial arrests and raids. He distinguished between the IA and IP, saying that the former were "skillful and professional" while the latter suffered from ties to political parties.

Provincial development efforts  
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¶7. (C) Maliki gave an enthusiastic summary of provincial development efforts, saying that since 2006 the government had focused on two priorities: 1) budget management and execution and 2) transparency and accountability. He said the government had formed a planning and development committee and decided to focus on essential services infrastructure, and that from 2006 to 2008 the government had spent 250 million USD on sewage. "It is hard to see the results," Maliki admitted, "because all of the work is

underground." Despite these efforts, Maliki conceded that "Maysan still can't compare to neighboring countries...what we need is foreign investment." COL Smith requested Maliki's support of PRT activities in Maysan, including positioning the PRT in Maysan Province to enable closer coordination with the governor and Provincial Council. Maliki seemed receptive to the idea.

Reservations about 100 million  
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¶8. (C) "Tariq Abdullah is responsible for everything" concerning the 100 million USD development fund, said Maliki. He added that he had "reservations" about the way that the fund was being allocated, but that he understood that Tidings of Peace "has two pages, one security, one development, and these allocations are political decisions." Maliki explained that the foremost priority of the GOI was job creation, and that it would concentrate on immediate-impact, labor-intensive projects such as road and sidewalk paving rather than longer-term development plans. Asked if he had any grounds to challenge the GOI's prioritization, Maliki laughed and said "That is really two questions: Do I have any authority? And will they listen to me anyway? The answer to both is no."

Iraqis want new blood in office  
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¶9. (C) Maliki said that he will not participate in the upcoming provincial elections, although he conceded that he would like to remain in office "not because I like power, but because I would like to finish the development projects I began." He said that he had endured many accusations and criticisms during his time in office, and admitted that "the people want to see new blood. As a Sadrist, I can say that the people are beginning to reject Sadrists." (Note: Maliki's ruling Hussein Ideology Front did not register for the upcoming provincial elections. However, Zaid Hoshi is registered as the leader of a new party named Kifa'at Maysan (Abilities of Maysan). During the drive through the city, poloff noticed that all pictures of Sadr had been defaced, although whether by local citizens or the ISF is unknown. End Note).

Election law needs U.S. pressure  
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¶10. (C) Maliki characterized the controversial July 22 passage of an elections law by the Iraqi parliament as a "joyous and sad occasion," explaining that while different

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groups came together to make a deal, they did so in a way that "distorted" the political process. "Don't record this," Maliki added, "but the only way the law will pass is if the U.S. pressures Talabani the way it pressured (VP) Abdel Mehdi to pass the provincial powers law."

Throw the singer in jail  
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¶11. (C) Near the end of the meeting participants discussed the possibility of providing PRT support for cultural activities. Maliki responded that his administration was undertaking several programs targeted at children designed to "teach about culture, dialogue, love...change can't come through coercion, we must educate society. The phrase in psychology is 'the collective mind.'" Informed that COL Smith had spoken to a local musician prior to the meeting, Maliki said "As Sadrists, we support theater, arts, literature, but not singing. Thanks for telling me - I'm going to throw him in jail." Moments later he said in English, "joke, just joke."

Comment

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¶12. (C) Understanding Maysan's provincial government has always required confronting a series of contradictions: A governor with reported militia ties at pains to present himself as a principled technocrat; official development plans that envision grand new suburbs, hospitals and universities while ordinary citizens struggle with a lack of even basic services. True to form, Maliki was candid about his political affiliations and concerns over a U.S. military presence; unsurprisingly, he was much more reluctant to discuss militia activities in the province.

¶13. (C) A political survivor, Maliki has managed to hold onto office despite ongoing ISF operations and widespread rumors over his imminent detention. However, with the central government responsible for both security and the allocation of the development fund, his authorities as governor have been greatly reduced. While local IA commanders have expressed their desire to arrest, or at least replace, Maliki, the fact that the central government has not authorized his detention is likely an indicator that he will remain in office for the time being. Ultimately, Maliki remains the elected leader of the province, and the PRT and CF will continue to engage with him and his office in the hopes he will eventually divest any remaining militia in favor of the political process. End Comment.  
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